

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
Karen P. Hewitt***

For Further Information, Contact: Assistant U. S. Attorney Orlando B. Gutierrez, 619-557-2968

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - March 5, 2007

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Maria Eugenia Gutierrez was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in San Diego by United States District Judge Marilyn L. Huff to serve 30 months in custody, based on Gutierrez' conviction for conspiring to smuggle and transport illegal aliens, bringing illegal aliens into the United States for financial gain, and money laundering. Judge Huff also ordered that Gutierrez serve a three-year term of supervised release following her release from prison, pay a \$10,000 fine, and pay a special assessment of \$300. As part of her guilty plea, prior to today's sentencing, Maria Eugenia Gutierrez forfeited \$400,000 to the United States, as proceeds of her offenses.

According to court documents, Gutierrez pled guilty on July 14, 2006, to a three-count Information charging her with an alien smuggling conspiracy that included arranging for transportation, or driving a vehicle that transported, illegal aliens into the United States from Mexico through the San Ysidro Port of Entry. In her guilty plea, Gutierrez admitted that she conspired with others to facilitate the entry of aliens into the United States and required payment of her smuggling fees in cash only, ranging in amounts from \$3,600 -

\$9,000. Gutierrez' coconspirators deposited the smuggling fees directly into her bank account, from which Gutierrez would make withdrawals using automatic teller machines inside various casinos. The funds were then used for gambling and subsequently "cashed-out" at the casinos. "Cashing out" caused the casino to issue an IRS Form W2-G which the defendant would retain with the intent to report the funds on her federal and state income tax returns as gambling winnings.

United States Attorney Hewitt said, "Smuggling people for money is both inhumane and unacceptable, in any form."

"This multi agency federal investigation is an example of law enforcement working together to dismantle a prolific human smuggling organization responsible for smuggling hundreds of illegal immigrant into the United States," said Mike Carney, Acting Special Agent in Charge for ICE investigations in San Diego. "ICE is committed to investigating criminal organizations that show no regard for human life and jeopardize the security of our nation's borders."

"IRS Criminal Investigators will continue to focus on money laundering and use their expertise in tracing the funds tied into smuggling activities and ensure that these individuals, who put our border security at risk, are brought to justice," said Kenneth J. Hines, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, San Diego Field Office.

Judge Huff ordered that Gutierrez surrender on April 20, 2007, to begin serving her sentence.

DEFENDANT

Case No. 05cr2244-H

Maria Gutierrez

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 8, United States Code, Sections 1324 (a) (1) (A) (v)(I) (Conspiracy to Induce Illegal Aliens to Enter the United States and To Transport Illegal Aliens);

Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324 (a) (2) (B) (ii) (Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting);

Title 8, United States Code, Sections 1324(a)(1)(iv) and (v)(ii) (Laundering Monetary Instruments); and Title 18, United States Code, Section 982 (a) (6) (Criminal Forfeiture).

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation

Federal Bureau of Investigation